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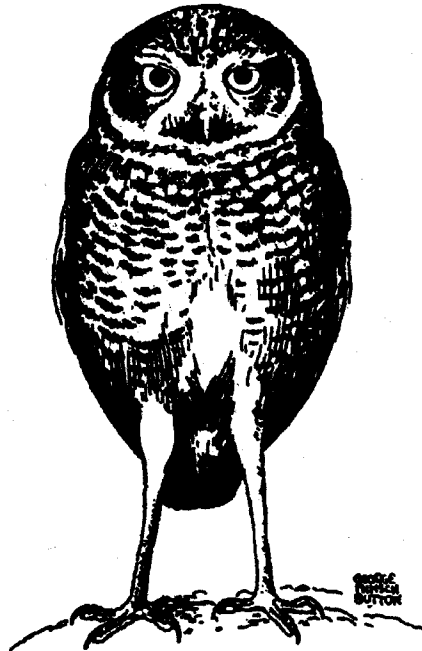
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# ***The Nebraska Bird Review***

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## FALL FIELD REPORT, August-November 2012

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## INTRODUCTION

Some of you may be curious about the sources of sightings I use to compile these reports. The primary sources are reports posted to NEBirds, the Nebraska listserv, along with the full reports (early and late dates, peak counts for all species) sent by a few faithful reporters around the state. The latter reports are very useful overviews of movements in the reporters' regions. Lately, thanks to a suggestion by Clem Klaphake, I have been receiving the eBird daily rarity report for Nebraska which I find to be an excellent check against reports posted to NEBirds, while providing a few additional reports of interest. As eBird becomes a major depository and source of data, how and to what extent these data can be utilized by seasonal reporters and state records committees is a topic under serious discussion. More on that as it unfolds.

In these reports, I often cite "early dates" and "late dates". These follow the style in *Birds of Nebraska* (Sharpe et al., 2001) and refer to the first or last set of accumulated dates that are within a few days of each other, preferably 3 or fewer, and so presumably define a sort of "consensus" arrival or departure date.

Now to the birds. This was an interesting fall in several ways. Raptor enthusiasts were excited about Harris's Hawk and Crested Caracara reports, while nesting Mississippi Kites, Broad-winged Hawks, and Ospreys added interest.

An amazing number of wood-warblers were found in the west, notably such rarities as Tennessee, Nashville, Magnolia, Bay-breasted, Chestnut-sided, and Blackburnian. I often think that the best way to find these "eastern" birds is to go west! A few wood-warblers arrived early: Black-and-white, Tennessee, Nashville, and Mourning.

Perhaps most exciting was the appearance of almost the full suite of Rocky Mountain birds and "winter finches" that are somewhat expected from time to time, with Pine Grosbeak the only exception. Steller's Jay, Mountain Chickadee, Cassin's Finch, and Evening Grosbeak were out west, Red and White-winged Crossbills were in the east, and Common Redpoll was essentially statewide.

Read on!

## ABBREVIATIONS

ad: adult

ADF: Arbor Day Farm, Nebraska City

BOL: Branched Oak L, Lancaster Co

CBL: Capitol Beach L, Lincoln

Cem: Cemetery

Co(s): County(ies)

CLNWR: Crescent L NWR, Garden Co

fem: female

FF: Fontenelle Forest, Sarpy Co

GPD: Gavins Point Dam, Knox/Cedar Cos

HCR: Harlan Co Res SRA, Harlan Co

imm: immature

juv: juvenile

L: Lake

LM: L McConaughy, Keith Co

LO: L Ogallala (includes contiguous Keystone L), Keith Co

m. ob.: many observers

NC: Nature Center

NM: National Monument

NWR: National Wildlife Refuge

NOU: Nebraska Ornithologists' Union

PL: Pawnee L, Lancaster Co

Res: Reservoir

PSP: Ponca SP, Dixon Co

RWB: Rainwater Basin, including parts of Phelps, Hamilton, York, Clay,  
Fillmore, and Thayer Cos

SCP: Spring Creek Prairie, Lancaster Co

SHP: State Historical Park

SL: Sewage Lagoon(s)

SP: State Park

SRA: State Recreation Area

WHNC: Wildcat Hills NC, Scotts Bluff Co

WMA: (State) Wildlife Management Area

WP: Wilderness Park, Lincoln

WPA: (Federal) Waterfowl Production Area

WSR: Wind Springs Ranch, Sioux Co

## GAZETTEER

Carter L: Omaha

Jack Sinn: Jack Sinn Memorial WMA, Lancaster and Saunders Cos

Sandhills: large area of sand-based prairie in north-central Nebraska

Wanahoo L: Saunders Co

Wehrspann L: Sarpy Co

## OBSERVERS

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TW: Tom Wittman, La Vista  
VC: Virginia Clark, North Platte

WF: William Flack, Kearney

WRS: W. Ross Silcock, Tabor, IA

#### SPECIES ACCOUNTS

**Black-bellied Whistling-Duck:** One was near Holdrege from around 25 Sep (JD *fide* JGJ) through 8 Oct (KS). This is Nebraska's 15th record for this increasingly-reported summer visitor.

**Greater White-fronted Goose:** One summered in Dakota Co (BFH); such reports are rare in the east. Another at HCR 16 Aug (G&WH) was with a group that included Snow Geese and Canada Geese; it "probably summered" there (G&WH). There are summer reports of likely injured birds most years, usually from central Nebraska. Migrants arrived on time, with the first flock of flyovers in Butler Co 15 Oct (CNK); no large numbers were reported.

**Snow Goose:** The goose group at HCR included 3 Snows, present 5 Aug-10 Oct (G&WH); these birds, as well as singles at BOL 24 Aug and 15 Sep (LE), in Dakota Co 8 Sep (BFH), and in Butler Co 18 Sep (CNK), continue a pattern of rather common summer reports of stragglers or possibly very early migrants. No large flocks were reported before the end of the period.

**Ross's Goose:** One in Hall Co 7 Oct (TC) was likely an early migrant, although Hall Co has hosted 3 of the 4 previous summer records. There were 6 further reports of only 7 birds before the end of the period (m. ob.).

**Cackling Goose:** Few had arrived before the end of the period; peak counts are around the end of Oct.

**Canada Goose:** Reports were routine for this abundant statewide fall migrant.

**Mute Swan:** Two ads were at a pond near Zorinsky L, Omaha, 30 Oct-4 Nov (AS photo; TW), continuing a series of reports of two birds that began with the arrival of two immatures in fall 2008. It seems likely these are the same birds, but as no young have been seen, they may be of the same gender. Due to the aggressive nature of these birds during breeding season, it is probably a good thing for other waterfowl and humans that a breeding population has not yet established. Another two were on the pond at Wyuka Cem, Lincoln, 14 Oct (RSt).

**Trumpeter Swan:** This species breeds throughout most of the Sandhills; 21 were counted on a drive through the western Sandhills 18-19 Sep (JGJ, LD). Fall flocking was in progress by late Nov; 50 were at Swan L, Arthur Co, 25 Nov (WF) and 50+ were on a pond west of Merriman 29 Nov (D&CN).

**Tundra Swan:** Albeit rare, Tundras were once the "default" swan species during fall migration. That position is now held by the increasingly numerous Trumpeter Swan. Identification of Tundras can be tricky, but 2 reports during peak migration time for this species were received that can be considered correct: an ad and 2 whitish imms were in Burt Co 12 Nov (EBe) and 3 ads and 2 imms were in Otoe Co 21 Nov (JG). Imm Trumpeter Swans are still rather dark in color in Nov.

**Wood Duck:** Reports were routine for this common statewide breeder.

**Gadwall:** Best count was the 1128 in Lancaster Co 28 Oct (LE); high fall counts range up to 5800.

**American Wigeon:** Reports were routine for this common statewide migrant.

**American Black Duck:** Few of this rare fall migrant have been reported in recent years; most arrive in late fall with Mallards. One in Burt Co 1 Nov (EBe) was the 6th-earliest on record.

**Mallard:** A fem with 3 "fuzzies" in Burt Co 16 Aug (CNK) was a rather late brood.

**Blue-winged Teal:** Reports were routine for this abundant fall migrant.

**Cinnamon Teal:** Fall sightings are few as birds molt and leave the state rather early. One was in Sheridan Co 17 Aug (WF); last dates are in Sep.

**Northern Shoveler:** First noted for fall were 5 early birds at PL 6 Aug (LE). True migration takes place beginning in Sep, and so these were presumably post primary-molt males or failed breeders.

**Northern Pintail:** As with Northern Shoveler, small groups may appear in Aug; up to 9 were at Jack Sinn 16-20 Aug (LE, JGJ) and 3 were at BOL 24 Aug (LE).

**Green-winged Teal:** This species accounts for many of the groups of "brown ducks" seen in late summer at favored ponds and lakes. Three were at Oliver Res 17 Aug (JJ) and one was at Hildreth SL 26 Aug (LR, RH); few breed in Nebraska.

**Canvasback:** This species breeds in low numbers in the western Sandhills, thought in the 1990s to be no more than 20 pairs, and so the counts of 18 at CLNWR and 29 at Swede L, Grant Co, 7-8 Aug (JGJ, LD) were encouraging. By 10 Oct, "hundreds" were in the western Sandhills (JGJ, LD).

**Redhead:** A pair at Hildreth SL 26 Aug (LR, RH) were early.

**Ring-necked Duck:** Reports were routine for this abundant statewide fall migrant.

**Greater Scaup:** There were 6 reports of this uncommon statewide migrant involving at least 12 birds: a fem in Dakota Co 22-24 Oct (BFH), 1-3 at BOL 2-9 Nov (LE), 3 at Wanahoo 13 Nov (JGJ), 2 at Yutan SL 18 Nov (CNK), and 3 at Carter L 24 Nov (RS, BG), a normal fall migration.

**Lesser Scaup:** The single at CLNWR 6 Sep (JGJ, LD) may have been an early migrant, although breeding occurs there on occasion. The 1035 at BOL 6 Nov (LE) was a good count; highs range up to 3450.

**Surf Scoter:** Some 7 singles were reported, a good showing. An imm was on LO 10 Oct (JGJ, LD), only 5 days later than record early. Singles were reported in the GPD area 26 Oct, 3 Nov, and 18 Nov (MB), an ad fem was in Pierce Co 28-29 Oct (MB, EB), an obliging fem was on a small pond in western Sarpy Co 16-19 Nov (DSt, m.ob.), and one was at CBL 18 Nov (LE).

**White-winged Scoter:** The 7 reported was a good showing for this species also; one was at Offutt Base L, Sarpy Co, 22 Oct (ARy), 1-2 fem/imms were at PL 28 Oct (LE), an ad male and an imm were at LM 20 Nov (TJW), one was at Maloney L, Lincoln Co, 20 Nov (TJW), and a fem was at BOL 22 Nov (LA).

**Black Scoter:** Generally the rarest of the scoters, only 3 were reported. One at BOL 7 Oct (LE) was 2nd-earliest on record, another was there 7 Nov (GR), and one was in southern Lancaster Co 17 Nov (LE).

**Long-tailed Duck:** Three singles were reported, about the norm: one at Alma SL 2 Nov (KS), one at GPD 18 Nov (MB), and an ad fem at Valparaiso SL 29-30 Nov (CNK, RSt, LE).

**Bufflehead:** Reports were routine for this common statewide fall migrant.



- Common Goldeneye:** Reports were routine for this common statewide fall migrant.
- Hooded Merganser:** Reports were routine for this common statewide fall migrant, less common westward.
- Common Merganser:** Reports were routine for this abundant statewide fall migrant.
- Red-breasted Merganser:** Reports were routine for this uncommon statewide fall migrant.
- Ruddy Duck:** The 130 at North Platte SL 25 Sep (TJW) were a rather early large group; the 691 in Lancaster Co 7 Nov (LE) was impressive, but high fall counts are 1000+.
- Northern Bobwhite:** Numbers are currently low in the southeast; best day's count in Lancaster Co by an active observer was 17, on 19 Oct (LE). Northerly were 20 in Valley Co 9 Sep (LR, RH).
- Gray Partridge:** The 2 reports were from widely-separated areas of the state where populations persist. Two flew over near Creighton 1 Nov (MB), and 5 were seen on WSR 15 Nov (HKH); the latter population, while small, has continued for several years.
- Ring-necked Pheasant:** Numbers were low in Dodge Co, where only one was seen during harvest by the farmer-observer (D&JP).
- Sharp-tailed Grouse:** The 20+ at Niobrara SP, Knox Co, 24 Nov (MB) were near the eastern edge of their Nebraska range.
- Greater Prairie-Chicken:** Reports were routine for this locally common native grassland species.
- Wild Turkey:** This species is doing exceptionally well in Nebraska. It is expanding its range from the Pine Ridge to surrounding areas (B&DW), including Scotts Bluff Co, where the 36 in the observer's yard 18 Aug was the most seen there for years (AK). A Nebraska Game and Parks biologist (TJW) noted: "They are everywhere... In the North Platte area you could probably easily see over a thousand in a morning if you tried, especially in the winter when they concentrate around feedlots and crop fields near timber." A flock of 90 was in Saunders Co 30 Nov (LE).
- Red-throated Loon:** There are only about 25 fall records; most in the east in early Nov. There were 3 reports: one at BOL 3 Nov (JGJ, RSt), 2 at GPD 3 Nov (MB), and 2 sightings of apparently the same bird at L Maloney, Lincoln Co, 9 and 20 Nov (TJW), only the 3rd fall sighting away from the east.
- Pacific Loon:** Usually a few more Pacific Loons than Red-throateds pass through each fall; this fall 4 were reported. Singles were at Willow Creek Res, Pierce Co, 28-30 Oct (MB, EB, JJ), at BOL 31 Oct-2 Nov (LE), on Lewis & Clark L near GPD 4 Nov (MB et al.), and at Wanahoo L 20-22 Nov (D&JP, GR, DSt).
- Common Loon:** Reports were statewide from 28 Oct (MB) through the period and totaled about 80 individuals (m. ob.), including a record high 30 on Lewis & Clark L, Knox and Cedar Cos, 4 Nov (MB et al.) and 12 at BOL 9 Nov (JGJ).
- Pied-billed Grebe:** Migration begins in mid-Aug, as exemplified by the 43 at Wehrspann L 16 Aug (CNK).
- Horned Grebe:** Average numbers were reported statewide, about 80 in all, through the period beginning with one at Wehrspann L 21 Sep (CNK); best count was only 14, at BOL 31 Oct (LE).

**Red-necked Grebe:** This species is being reported more often in recent years and is now a regular but rare fall migrant; an ad was at LO 10 Oct (JGJ, LD), and singles were at Lewis & Clark L, Cedar Co, 3 Nov (MB) and BOL the same day (D&JP).

**Eared Grebe:** Reports were routine for this common statewide migrant, less common in the east.

**Western Grebe:** LM is a fall staging area for this species; 7000-7500 were there 7 Aug (JGJ, LD) and 28 Sep (CNK, WRS), down from expected peak counts, which usually occur around 1 Oct in the range of 20,000+.

**Clark's Grebe:** Easterly reports are rare; one in the GPD area 20 Oct (MB, BFH) is only the 7th such fall report. Like Western Grebe, fall movement begins early, and so one at Winters Creek L, Scotts Bluff Co, 4 Aug (KD, details) was likely on the move. The only other report was of 2 in northern Sheridan Co 19 Oct (B&DW), within the breeding range.

**Double-crested Cormorant:** Breeding was in progress at Goose L, CLNWR, 7 Aug, when 40 ads and 20 young juvs were present (JGJ, LD). This is a regular breeding site. Stragglers included singles at Offutt Base L, Sarpy Co, 30 Nov, likely an injured bird seen there since summer (ARy), and 1-2 at PL 30 Nov (LE, RSt).

**American White Pelican:** A fall record-tying count was the 3000 at Snyder Bend, Dakota Co, 8 Sep (BFH).

**American Bittern:** Cell phone cameras are being used more often as their quality improves to document strange (and expected) occurrences; an American Bittern was captured posing beside a small bush at a downtown Omaha intersection 13 Sep (TF).

**Least Bittern:** None were reported; this is a rare fall migrant in the east.

**Great Blue Heron:** Reports were routine for this common statewide summer and fall resident and migrant.

**Great Egret:** One at Wagon Train L, Lancaster Co, 4 Nov (TG) was 10th-latest on record. This species is rare in fall in the west; one was at Box Butte Res, Dawes Co, 28 Sep (CNK, WRS).

**Snowy Egret:** Reports were routine for this uncommon statewide fall migrant.

**Little Blue Heron:** An imm in Hayes Co 30 Aug (WF) and one near Ogallala 6 Sep (CWH) were only the 3rd and 4th fall records from the western half of the state. There are no fall Panhandle records. The two additional reports this fall were of an ad in Clay Co 7 Aug (JGJ, LD) and an imm at BOL 31 Aug (LE).

**Cattle Egret:** Numbers continue to be rather low; best counts were only 20 and 17, in Brown and Greeley Cos respectively (JGJ, LD). One near Niobrara 20 and 26 Oct (MB) was rather late; last dates are in early Nov.

**Green Heron:** Northerly and westerly were singles at Swan L, southeast Cherry Co, 10 Aug (DH et al.) and at Bridgeport 20 Aug (LJH). There are few Panhandle records; breeding may have occurred in Garden Co in 1937, and there are 2 previous North Platte Valley Panhandle records, one of these also from Bridgeport. Breeding has occurred in Cherry and Lincoln Cos, with most recent summer reports from the latter; there are few reports from Cherry Co. There are only 5 fall reports in all for the Panhandle.

**Black-crowned Night-Heron:** Reports were routine for this fairly common fall migrant.

**Yellow-crowned Night-Heron:** The late summer "mini-invasion" extended into "fall"; 1-2 juvs continued at Jack Sinn through 17 Aug (JR, EA,ET), the 3 in Dakota Co were still present 16 Aug (BFH), and the imm in Dodge Co was still present 1 Aug (D&JP). Sightings from new locations were of 2 at Wanahoo L 10 Aug (TG) and a juv in Nance Co 16-19 Aug (JJ, LR, RH).

**White-faced Ibis:** Reports were routine for this fairly common statewide fall migrant.

**Turkey Vulture:** The 221 that flew over Blair in 75 minutes 13 Sep (DSt) was a good count; high fall counts are mostly estimates, in the range 200-300.

**Osprey:** A new nest site was discovered this fall, the 4th known for the state: two birds were at a nest near Marina Landing, LM, 7 Aug (JGJ, LD). The 3 previously known sites are near Keystone, Keith Co, near Riverside Zoo in Scotts Bluff Co, and at Winters Creek L, Scotts Bluff Co. All 3 sites have artificial nest platforms. This year, the Keystone site had 2 ads 19 Jun, but the platform was relocated and no re-nesting took place (GW); the Riverside site hatched young but severe weather in Jul apparently destroyed the nest and only 2 ads (no young) were present 4 Aug (KD); and the Winters Creek L site platform had an ad and a flight-capable young bird feeding 4 Aug, but their provenance is unknown as neither of the two Winters Creek L platforms were in use for nesting during the summer (KD).

**Mississippi Kite:** The nesting pair near 4th and Carr in North Platte raised one chick to fledging stage but it died and was found to be emaciated 29 Aug (TJW). Local observers indicated that the young bird had been fed only every 60-90 minutes instead of the necessary 10-20 minutes, a consequence of the extreme drought in the area and lack of dragonflies, a major food source. Also, the early spring led to a cicada hatch too early for this food source to be useful to the kites (TJW). On the other hand, the Ogallala birds did very well; 36 were in the air 11 Sep, apparently readying for departure (JO). Rare migrants in the east were an imm at PSP 3 Sep (TJW) and a juv flyover at FF 22 Sep (JT), the latter rather late. Last dates are 27 and 29 Sep and 1 Oct.

**Bald Eagle:** Reports were routine for this fairly common statewide summer resident and common statewide fall migrant.

**Northern Harrier:** One at Jack Sinn 16 Aug (LE) was rather early for a migrant; nesting may occur anywhere in the state.

**Sharp-shinned Hawk:** First arrival reported was in Otoe Co 6 Sep (LF); earliest dates are in late Aug.

**Cooper's Hawk:** Reports were routine for this common statewide summer resident and fall migrant.

**Northern Goshawk:** Singles of this rare migrant were at Niobrara SP, Knox Co, 26 Oct (MB) and 24 Nov (MB).

**Harris's Hawk:** A major surprise was Nebraska's third, a road-killed bird found in Lancaster Co 26 Oct (JCB fide JGJ; photo). There are 7 records for Kansas as well as a single nesting record in southwest Kansas.



This road-killed Harris's Hawk, Nebraska's third record, was found and photographed in Lancaster Co 26 Oct 2012 by Mrs. Jon C. Barber.

**Red-shouldered Hawk:** After an apparently unsuccessful breeding attempt at PL in 2009, there had been no reports from there until this fall, when a juv was seen 28 Sep (LE) and singles were present 10 and 31 Oct (LE). There are no currently known active nesting sites in the state.

**Broad-winged Hawk:** Migration begins generally in late Aug, and so sightings in early and mid-Aug in the Missouri River Valley may be of locally-fledged juvs

or breeding ads. In this category were 2 over Bellevue 5 Aug (ARy), 2 imms in southeast Washington Co 10 Aug (CNK), and 1-2 imms at FF 11-14 Aug (L&BP). One in Lancaster Co 16 Aug (LE) was likely a migrant, but breeding cannot be ruled out.

**Swainson's Hawk:** Rare in summer in the RWB, one was in Clay Co 7 Aug (JGJ, LD). Huge numbers can occur on occasion during fall, but unexpected was the aggregation of 500-1000 in Dawson Co 28 Sep (fide JGJ, photo). High fall counts on record are estimates, but include 4 previous reports of 1000+ birds, all 4 in the very short period 29 Sep-2 Oct.

**Red-tailed Hawk:** Both Harlan's and Western forms were early; a Harlan's in Lancaster Co 28 Sep (LE) was record early by one day, and a dark morph was 7 days later than record early in Adams Co 30 Sep (LR, RH).

**Ferruginous Hawk:** Easternmost report was of a juv near Niobrara 26 Oct (MB); there are only 10 fall records for the east, half of which are undocumented.

**Rough-legged Hawk:** Reports were routine for this fairly common fall migrant.

**Golden Eagle:** Reports were routine for this uncommon western resident.

**Yellow Rail:** This elusive species can be flushed by walking through rank grass near a body of water; one such was at Prairie View L, Douglas Co, 3 Oct (JR). Another was flushed at Wehrspann L in similar conditions 4 Oct 2010 (CNK; I apologize for omitting this record last year). These are only the 11th and 12th fall records.

**Virginia Rail:** Reports were routine for this fairly common statewide fall migrant.

**Sora:** It appears that breeding occurred in unusual habitat at FF; 2-5 were present along a swampy stream within a floodplain forest 27 Aug-10 Oct (RB, PS, JR, m. ob.), and photos (PS) suggest the presence of at least one juv. While these may have been migrants, the continuing presence of at least one smaller bird suggests otherwise.

**American Coot:** The 8000 at LO 28 Sep (WRS, CNK) was the second-highest fall count on record after the 17,000+ in Lancaster Co Oct 2009.

**Sandhill Crane:** The breeding pair at Kiowa WMA, Scotts Bluff Co, was seen 22 Sep, but the chick seen earlier in summer was no longer present (KD).

**Whooping Crane:** One was late and easterly flying from Sioux City, Iowa, into Dakota Co, Nebraska, 25 Nov (HH, details). The sighting was documented and accepted by the IOU Records Committee.

**Black-bellied Plover:** Reports were routine for this uncommon statewide fall migrant.

**American Golden-Plover:** Most migrants in fall are juvs, which move through mostly in Sep-Oct; thus early sightings of ads are uncommon. Sightings of 1-5 birds at Jack Sinn 11 Aug (JGJ) through 22 Sep (JGJ, LE) were likely ads; there was no influx of likely juvs during the latter part of that period. Few juvs appeared anywhere; best count of likely juvs was only 13, at Calamus Res. 18 Sep (JGJ, LD).

**Semipalmated Plover:** Reports were routine for this common statewide fall migrant.

**Piping Plover:** One at BOL 31 Aug (LE) was a migrant; there are few reports in fall away from breeding locations.



Adult and juvenile Soras at Fontenelle Forest, Sarpy Co., 28 Sept 2012. Photographed by Phil Swanson.

**Killdeer:** Large numbers were at Jack Sinn through mid-Sep, peak count the near-record 992 there 8 Sep (LE); only 45 remained by 15 Sep (LE). Record count is 1000.

**Mountain Plover:** None were reported; there are fewer than 10 records after 31 Jul.

**Black-necked Stilt:** Numbers were unremarkable; the only easterly report was of 2 in Clay Co 7 Aug (JGJ, LD). Dry conditions were likely the cause.

**American Avocet:** More than usual were reported in the east; a total of about 40 (m. ob.), including peak count of 18 at Jack Sinn 31 Aug (LE). A record-high 1100 were found in the western Sandhills 5 Sep, including 654 at a single lake north of Lakeside (JGJ, LD).

**Spotted Sandpiper:** Reports were routine for this common statewide fall migrant.

**Solitary Sandpiper:** Oct reports are few, with only about 21 previous reports after 23 Sep. However, this fall 2 were at FF 23 Sep (RM), one remaining very late through 8 Oct (L&BP, PS). Another was late in Douglas Co 4 Oct (JR, SS). The 23 at Jack Sinn 9 Aug (LE) was a good tally; highs are 38, 39, and 62.

**Greater Yellowlegs:** There were several reports at later dates; one was in Lincoln Co 12-16 Nov (TJW), 3 were in Jefferson Co 15 Nov (D&JP), and one was in southern Buffalo Co 13 Nov (RSt). Late dates are 17 (twice) and 18 Nov, with 3 later dates through 5 Dec.

**Willet:** One at Kiowa WMA, Scotts Bluff Co, 22 Sep (B&DW, AK) was tardy; late dates are 27 and 29 Sep (twice), with 4 Oct dates and one in Nov.

**Lesser Yellowlegs:** Reports were routine for this abundant statewide fall migrant.

**Upland Sandpiper:** This species departs early in fall; flyovers were noted in Hall Co late Jul and early Aug (JLL). One in Dodge Co 18 Sep (D&JP) was tardy; there are fewer than 20 records for Oct.

**Long-billed Curlew:** This species also departs early in fall: last reported was one in Perkins Co 31 Aug (WF). Late dates are in mid-Sep.

**Marbled Godwit:** Like the two preceding species, this grassland specialist also departs early; breeding occurs only in low numbers in the western Sandhills, and so 7 in that region 8 Aug (JGJ, LD) were likely migrants, as was one in Sheridan Co 10 Aug (DH et al.). Rare in the east in fall, one in Clay Co 7 Aug (JGJ, LD) was only the 17th RWB record and 28th east of the Panhandle and Keith Co.

**Ruddy Turnstone:** The only report of this irregular fall migrant was of one in western Seward Co 3 Sep (TJW); this is only the 28th fall record for the state.

**Sanderling:** Reports were routine for this fairly common statewide fall migrant.

**Semipalmated Sandpiper:** Reports were routine for this common statewide fall migrant.

**Western Sandpiper:** This species is a fairly common fall migrant in the state; this fall all reports were from Jack Sinn, where a single juv was present 16-19 Aug (LE, DL), 4 on 31 Aug (LE), and one on 21 Sep (LE). Juvs generally arrive in mid-Aug.

**Least Sandpiper:** The 9 at Olive Creek Res, Lancaster Co, 18 Nov (LE) were tardy; late dates are 23 (twice) and 27 Nov.

**Baird's Sandpiper:** One in Dodge Co 14 Nov (D&JP) was tardy; there are only 8 later dates. Large numbers were in the western Sandhills 7-8 Aug: 1200 on 7 Aug and 2120 on 8 Aug (JGJ, LD), highest counts on record are 4000+, all at LM in the period 27 Jul-22 Aug.

**Pectoral Sandpiper:** Peak count at Jack Sinn was 768 on 16 Aug (LE); numbers had declined to 49 by 14 Sep (LE). There are only 3 higher fall counts, topped by 1200. One in Dodge Co 14 Nov (D&JP) was 6th-latest on record.

**Stilt Sandpiper:** Reports were routine for this common statewide fall migrant.

**Buff-breasted Sandpiper:** Most reports were from Jack Sinn due to the heavy coverage by observers there this fall; most were found in Aug through mid-Sep, with peak count 26 on 31 Aug (LE). Best count elsewhere was the 15 at BOL 31 Aug (LE).

**Short-billed Dowitcher:** Only 8 of this uncommon fall migrant were reported, 3 in the east 9-26 Aug (LE, JGJ, JWH) and 5 in the western Sandhills 10 Aug (DH et al.). Only one was identified to age class, a juv at Jack Sinn 11 Aug (JGJ); this is an early date for this age class, which migrates later than ads with little or no overlap.

**Long-billed Dowitcher:** Reports were routine for this common statewide fall migrant.

**Wilson's Snipe:** One at Jack Sinn 1 Aug (LE) was likely summering, as 1-2 were present Jun-Jul (LE). Breeding has occurred in the area.

**American Woodcock:** The few reports were, except for one, from the east at likely breeding locations; last reported was one at BOL 18 Nov (SS, SMa, GR, LE), 4th-latest on record. Only the 2nd Panhandle record was one photographed at Gordon 14 Nov (fide KD).

**Wilson's Phalarope:** As with Wilson's Snipe, 1-2 summered at Jack Sinn (JR, JGJ), where breeding has occurred, although no evidence of breeding was reported this year. Large numbers in the western Sandhills 7-8 Aug included a record-high 6200 there 8 Aug (JGJ, LD).

**Red-necked Phalarope:** Juvs are more likely to occur in the east, but are uncommon; 1-2 were at Jack Sinn 14-31 Aug (JGJ, LE), 1-3 were at BOL 18 Aug-28 Sep (LE), and one was on the Platte River along the Cass/Sarpy Cos line 19 Aug (CNK). The 18 in the western Sandhills 5 Sep (JGJ, LD) was a good fall tally; high counts are 22-45.

**Red Phalarope:** A juv/first winter bird at BOL 27 Oct (JGJ) was 2nd-latest on record and one of only 15 fall records for the species.

**Black-legged Kittiwake:** A near-ad was photographed at BOL 4 Nov (SMA, RM); there are only 3 earlier dates, but interestingly one of those is an ad also. Most fall records are of imms.

**Sabine's Gull:** This was a typical fall for this species with 1-4 at BOL 12-25 Sep (LE, JGJ) and 1-2 at PL 15-25 Sep (JGJ, LE).

**Bonaparte's Gull:** The 146 at BOL 2 Nov (LE) was a good count; highs are 200-675.

**Franklin's Gull:** The 41,110 in Lancaster Co 21 Sep (LE) was impressive, but high counts are 85,000-300,000!

**Ring-billed Gull:** Reports were routine for this abundant statewide fall migrant.

**California Gull:** At least 12 were at LM through 10 Oct (JGJ, LD, WRS, CNK, JJ), as expected. Rare away from LM were one at L Alice, Scotts Bluff Co, 28 Sep (WRS, CNK) and 1-2 at L Maloney, Lincoln Co, 16-26 Nov (TJW).

**Herring Gull:** An ad was early at LM 28 Sep-1 Oct (WRS, CNK, JGJ, LD); earliest dates for ads are 13, 16, 17 Sep.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull:** Two of this regular uncommon fall migrant were reported: an imm at LM 7 Aug (JDJ, LD), 2nd-earliest on record for fall, and an ad there 28 Sep-10 Oct (WRS, CNK, JGJ, LD).

**Least Tern:** Migrants were on the move in early Aug. A juv was at Jack Sinn 5 Aug (JGJ), 1-3 were in Lancaster Co 6-18 Aug (LE), 2 were at LM 7 Aug (JGJ, LD), and one was in Sheridan Co 17 Aug (WF). The latter 2 reports are unexpected; this species is rare in the west.

**Caspian Tern:** The only reports were from Lancaster Co: 1-2 were at BOL 8-28 Sep (LE) and 2 were at PL 25 Sep (LE). There are only about 6 records for Oct.

**Black Tern:** Reports were routine for this common statewide fall migrant.

**Common Tern:** There were no reports of this uncommon statewide fall migrant.

**Arctic Tern:** Nebraska's 5th was a first-winter bird at Lewis and Clark L, Cedar Co, 20 Oct (MB). This is the latest of the 5, which are in May, Jun, Sep (2), Oct.

**Forster's Tern:** Record-high counts were the amazing 175 at BOL 31 Aug (LE) and 109 at LM 7 Aug (JGJ, LD). Previous high was 95 at LM. Prior to this fall there were only 19 records later than 23 Sep, but this fall there were 5 reports of 6 birds, including 2 birds record late by 9 days at LM 17 Nov (TJW, details). Other late birds were singles at PL 21-25 Sep (LE), at BOL 28 Sep (LE), in Sheridan Co 10 Oct (JGJ, LD), and in Washington Co 27 Oct (NOU).

**Rock Pigeon:** Reports were routine for this common statewide resident.



- Eurasian Collared-Dove:** Still uncommon in urban Omaha, one was at 30th and Cuming 1 Aug (JR).
- White-winged Dove:** The only report was of one near Mitchell 13 Nov (KD), only the 9th winter (11 Oct-19 Mar) record. This species is a rare summer visitor and occasional breeder in Nebraska.
- Mourning Dove:** One gathering nest material in Lincoln 16 Aug (LE) was a little tardy, although this species has been known to produce 5 broods in a season. One along the Niobrara River near Merriman 24 Nov (WF) was late; there are only 2 later records for the north. Counts in the hundreds are few; "hundreds" were in Franklin Co 26 Aug (LR, RH). High fall tally is 4000+.
- Yellow-billed Cuckoo:** Reports were routine for this fairly common statewide summer resident, uncommon in the west.
- Black-billed Cuckoo:** Rather alarmingly, none were reported. This species appears to be in serious decline in Nebraska.
- Barn Owl:** Most common in the west, the reports were of 4 at CLNWR 5 Sep (JGJ, LD), a stronghold for the species, and one photographed in Scotts Bluff Co 22 Sep (MS photo, fide KD).
- Eastern Screech-Owl:** Reports were routine for this common statewide resident.
- Great Horned Owl:** Reports were routine for this common statewide resident.
- Snowy Owl:** Following last winter's major invasion, reports this fall indicated a significant "echo" year. Five had been reported by the end of the period; one near Avoca 6 Nov, now in recovery (BF fide JGJ), was 2nd-earliest on record. First sighting in the 2011 invasion was 8 Nov. The others included one, also now in recovery, which pleased the crowds by perching on the CenturyLink Center in downtown Omaha 8-16 Nov (AS photo, DLe, m. ob.), and singles in Knox Co 16 Nov (fide JGJ), near Hebron 20 Nov (fide JGJ), and near Ashland 30 Nov (fide JGJ).
- Burrowing Owl:** Only the 7th eastern fall record since 1974 was one at SCP 24 Sep (ML fide RSt).
- Barred Owl:** One at Grove L WMA, Antelope Co, 27 Nov (D&JP) was at the northwestern limit of the Nebraska range.
- Long-eared Owl:** The only report of this uncommon winter visitor and rare resident was of one at BOL 2 Nov (LE).
- Short-eared Owl:** A total of 8 were reported statewide (m. ob.), beginning 30 Oct with 3 at Jack Sinn (JC, SS). Fall movement by this nomadic species is unpredictable, but usually begins in late Oct.
- Northern Saw-whet Owl:** None were reported; this is a fairly common though elusive fall migrant, mostly in the east, that arrives in mid-Oct.
- Common Nighthawk:** One at FF 10 Oct (JR, SMa) was rather late; last dates are 20-24 Oct. Excellent counts were reported, including 400 over the Purple Martin roost in Omaha 27 Aug (JED, JR), 2nd-highest fall count on record (behind 600); 292 flying over in 32 minutes in western Douglas Co 16 Sep (DSt); and 200 over Alma 25 Sep (G&WH).
- Common Poorwill:** Reports were routine for this common summer resident in the western half of the state.
- Chuck-will's-widow:** As there are only 5 reports for Aug and none for Sep, this species is usually unreported in fall, as was the case this fall.

**Whip-poor-will, Eastern:** Three in Polk Co 2 Sep (MN) were westerly, likely migrants. This species sometimes becomes vocal for a short period in fall centered around peak migration.

**Chimney Swift:** Reports were routine for this common summer resident, less common westward.

**White-throated Swift:** Reports were routine for this fairly common Panhandle summer resident.

**Ruby-throated Hummingbird:** A tardy imm was in a Lincoln yard 4-14 Oct (JGJ), the 4th-latest on record. Westerly reports continue to accumulate; one was in a Scotts Bluff Co yard 8 Aug (KD, DH), a male was videotaped in an Ogallala yard 2 Sep (CWH), and 3, one a male, were in a Hall Co yard 3 Sep (JLL).

**Calliope Hummingbird:** This species appeared in good numbers, total around 20, in the western Panhandle (m. ob); they were "all over Gering" 2-6 Aug (RSg), and about 10 singles passed through a yard near Mitchell through 1 Sep (KD). Reports were eastward to Lincoln Co 12 Sep (VC, photo), 3 were in an Oshkosh yard 7 Aug (GA fide KD, pics), and a male was seen 4 Aug in Ogallala (CWH).

**Broad-tailed Hummingbird:** Most reports were from the DeLara yard near Mitchell; 1-2 were there through 26 Aug (KD), a minimum of 4 different birds were in a yard south of Gering 4-15 Aug (AK).

**Rufous Hummingbird:** As with Broad-tailed, most reports were from the DeLara yard; at least one was present daily through 26 Aug (KD). Easterly were one in Oshkosh 7-8 Aug (GS fide KD, photo), one in Ogallala 15 Aug (CWH), and one, possibly two, in neighboring Hall Co yards 17-27 Aug (JLL). In all, about 15 were reported.

**Hummingbird sp.:** One observer in western Nebraska noted that he sees more hummers in years when fires are prevalent in the Rocky Mountains (CWH), and in the east, numbers were down about 50% in a Lincoln yard that is monitored by video cameras (R&SW).

**Belted Kingfisher:** Reports were routine for this fairly common summer resident.

**Lewis's Woodpecker:** The apparently small population reported during summer beginning in 2010 in the Sowbelly Canyon and Pants Butte area continued; 6 were found there 7 Aug (DH et al.).

**Red-headed Woodpecker:** Reports were routine for this common statewide summer visitor, less common in the west.

**Acorn Woodpecker:** One photographed at a Blair feeder 7 Oct (MK) was Nebraska's second; the other was near Chambers May 1996.

**Red-bellied Woodpecker:** This species continues to expand its range westward in the North Platte River Valley; one was at Bridgeport 14 Aug (LJH) and another was in Scotts Bluff Co 22 Sep (AK).

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** As in recent years, this species was widely-reported, some 30 in all, including westerly reports that have increased also in recent years. Two were at Scotts Bluff NM 26 Sep (AD, MS) and a juv was there 27 Sep (MS); one was at a feeder at LM 9 Nov (JB, photo) and was still present 17 Nov (TJW); and one was in North Platte 13 Nov (TJW). Migration begins in mid-Sep; thus a juv at FF 15 Sep (JR) was rather early. Usually solitary, the 3 at BOL 5 Nov (JC, SS) tied the high fall count. An imm at Grove L, Antelope Co, 24 Nov (LR, RH) was tardy at that location.

**Red-naped Sapsucker:** Typical of fall migration for this rare western Panhandle migrant, there were 2 reports: one was south of Gering 11 Sep (AK) and a juv was at Little Lake Alice, Scotts Bluff Co, 30 Sep (KD, details).

**Downy Woodpecker:** Intriguing was the appearance for the 3rd winter running of one with a yellow (rather than red) nape. It has appeared at the same yard between Mitchell and Scottsbluff Feb 2010, fall of 2010 and Mar 2011, and this fall 25 Nov (BS fide AD; photo). It has minimal white markings on its shoulders, suggesting Rocky Mountain provenance. Strangely, it appeared in the DeLara yard, about a mile to the west, 24 Nov (KD).

**Hairy Woodpecker:** One at Willow L, western Brown Co, 18 Sep was unexpected given the Sandhills habitat (JGJ, LD). This species is known to move southwards on occasion in fall.



This Crested Caracara was photographed by Betsy Finch at Raptor Recovery 11 Nov 2012 after being found near Genoa, Nebraska, 14 Jul 2012.

**Northern Flicker:** Migrants arriving in the west are “yellow-shafted”, in contrast to the local breeding “salmon-shafted” birds; first noted were 2 at Bridgeport 13 Sep (LJH). “Red-shafted” birds were first noted eastward at the same location 11 Sep (LJH) and east to Burt Co 11 Oct (CNK).

**Pileated Woodpecker:** Expected Missouri River riparian forest reports included 2-3 at FF during the period (m. ob.) as well as one at nearby N.P. Dodge Park to the north 12 Nov (JGr). Interesting was the presence of 2 along the Little Blue River in Jefferson Co 15 Nov (fide JGJ), where one was found last year.

**Crested Caracara:** A few caracaras have been reported on the Great Plains north of their southwestern United States range in recent years, but still a major surprise was the curious saga of a bird picked up near Genoa 14 Jul, "retained", then transferred to Raptor Recovery 11 Nov, where it was photographed (BF fide JGJ). The bird had an eye missing and was emaciated when received (BF fide JGJ). There is only one prior report, not accepted by the NOU Records Committee, of a bird seen twice in Seward Co 20, 21 Aug 2011, only 120 miles north of a report in Kansas 17 days earlier.

**American Kestrel:** Reports were routine for this common fall migrant.

**Merlin:** One identified to subspecies *Falco columbarius richardsoni*, the Nebraska wintering form, was in Dakota Co 8 Sep (BFH). Early and late dates for the long-distance migrant *F. c. columbarius* in Nebraska are 13 Sep and 2 Dec.

**Peregrine Falcon:** Nov reports are few; one was at LM 17 Nov (TJW). A very dark bird was over North Platte 21 Aug (TJW); juvs can be dark.

**Prairie Falcon:** This species is rare at best eastward, but several sightings were reported, beginning rather early with singles in Valley Co 8 Oct (TH) and at HCR the same day (KS). Sightings were as far east as Madison Co 5-12 Nov (DB), Hall Co 30 Nov (JLL), and Jefferson Co 15 Nov (D&JP).

**Budgerigar:** One was with House Sparrows in Omaha 7 Oct (SMA); the 5 Nebraska reports of free-flying Budgies are all (strangely) in the period 8 Aug-7 Oct, suggesting fall dispersal (OK, I am kidding).

**Olive-sided Flycatcher:** Rare in the west, singles were at different Kimball Co locations 17 Aug (JJ) and 19 Aug (D&JP).

**Western Wood-Pewee:** Reports were routine for this common western summer resident.

**Eastern Wood-Pewee:** Ads feeding fledged young 15 Aug in Bellevue (CNK) was a tardy attempt, likely a re-nest or second brood.

**Yellow-bellied Flycatcher:** This species is elusive and difficult to identify; there are few fall records, and so the 5 reported this fall was a surprise. Singles were at Wehrspann L 16 Aug (CNK), WP the same day (LE), northeast Douglas Co 18 Aug (CH), and near Creighton 5 Sep (MB), only the 3rd for Nebraska for the veteran observer. The fifth report was about a month later than previous late dates; one with a "completely yellow belly and tail coverts" was at Wehrspann L 14 Oct (JWH). There are 6 previous Oct reports, including one banded 9 Oct.

**Acadian Flycatcher:** There were no reports of this uncommon southeastern Nebraska summer resident; last dates are in mid-Sep.

**Alder Flycatcher:** Previous fall records of this species for Nebraska are in the period 21 Jul-6 Sep, but this fall the 7 reports (9 birds) were in the period 5-28 Sep, the last, in Omaha, of a vocalizing bird (JR). Latest documented dates for Minnesota, Iowa, and Kansas are 21, 8, and 12 Sep respectively; Birds of North America Online notes that Alder Flycatcher migrates on average a week later in fall than Willow Flycatcher (see below).

**Willow Flycatcher:** Last reported were 2 in Lancaster Co 8 Sep (LE), although 2 reported as "Traill's" Flycatcher (Alder/Willow) were at FF 15 Sep (JR). Last Nebraska dates for Willow are 11-12 Sep.

**Least Flycatcher:** The reports were, as expected, in the period 13 Aug-22 Sep (m. ob.).

**Hammond's Flycatcher:** The two reports were from Gering Cem: singles on 6 Sep (KD, MS photo) and 22 Sep (KD, AK), the latter is the latest on record by a day. This is a rare but regular Panhandle fall migrant 25 Aug-22 Sep.

**Dusky Flycatcher:** None were reported of this rare but regular Panhandle fall migrant 24 Aug-20 Sep.

**Cordilleran Flycatcher:** Only two were reported, although reports of migrants are few. Singles were south of Gering 25 Aug (AK) and at Gering Cem 6 Sep (KD, MS photo).

**Eastern Phoebe:** One at FF 22 Oct (L&BP) was tardy; last dates are 25-27 Oct.

**Say's Phoebe:** One at WSR 29 Sep (HKH et al.) was a bit late; last dates are 3-5 Oct. One in Rock Co 18 Sep (JGJ, LD) was also a bit tardy there.

**Great Crested Flycatcher:** Reports were routine for this common statewide summer resident.

**Cassin's Kingbird:** One in Scotts Bluff Co 22 Sep (KD, AK, photo) was lingering; last dates are 25-27 Sep.

**Western Kingbird:** Reports were routine for this common statewide summer resident.

**Eastern Kingbird:** Reports were routine for this common statewide summer resident.

**Scissor-tailed Flycatcher:** None were reported; this after a summer with fewer reports than in other recent years.

**Loggerhead Shrike:** Some long drives through the Sandhills yielded few sightings; only 2 were seen on a 900-mile (!) drive 27 Aug (JGJ, LD), but 7 on the same drive 5 Sep (JGJ, LD). Only one was found on a 112-mile drive in the cedar canyons of Lincoln Co 7 Aug (TJW). More encouraging were the 9 in Sioux Co 8 Aug (DH et al.).

**Northern Shrike:** By the end of the period 15 had been reported (m. ob.); earliest was one in Merrick Co 14 Oct (LR, RH), about on time.

**Bell's Vireo:** Reports were routine for this common statewide summer resident.

**Yellow-throated Vireo:** Reports were routine for this fairly common eastern summer resident.

**Plumbeous Vireo:** The only migrants reported were in Scotts Bluff Co on expected dates: one was in a Scottsbluff yard 30 Aug (AD) and another was at Gering Cem 6 Sep (KD).

**Cassin's Vireo:** Five were reported of this rare but regular western fall migrant. Easterly were 2 at LM 28 Sep (CNK, WRS), latest on record by 2 days; others were at Gering Cem 6 Sep (KD), and singles were banded at WHNC 14 and 20 Sep (MM, AK).

**Blue-headed Vireo:** Reports were routine for this fairly common eastern migrant, rare in the central part of the state.

**Warbling Vireo:** Reports were routine for this common statewide summer resident.

**Philadelphia Vireo:** Usually fewer than 10 of this uncommon fall migrant are reported. This year there were 4: singles in Bellevue 15 Aug (CNK), in Lincoln 18 Aug (DL), in Knox Co 19 Aug (MB), and in Lincoln 20 Aug (LE).

**Red-eyed Vireo:** The 4 latest reported were all in the Panhandle and were 2 weeks or more later than the last reported in the east; singles were at Alliance 28 Sep

(WRS, CNK), WSR 29 Sep (HKH et al.), WHNC 2 Oct (MM), and Gering 3 Oct (RSg). Last dates are 7-11 Oct.

**Pinyon Jay:** Three of the 4 reports were as expected from the northern Panhandle, 5 birds in Monroe Canyon 8 Aug (DH et al.), one in Sioux Co 18 Aug (JJ), and one in Garden Co 23 Nov (LJ, photo). The 4th was a surprise: 7 birds in Ogallala 6 Nov, "the first there for several years" (CWH), indicated some eastward movement in this species as well as Steller's Jay.

**Steller's Jay:** There was a localized irruption of this species into Scotts Bluff Co; the only report away from there was one at a feeder at LM 8-17 Nov (JB photo, TJW). The photographed Scotts Bluff Co birds were all of the expected Rocky Mountain subspecies *Cyanocitta stelleri annectens*; 7-8 were present. One appeared at Wildcat Hills NC 15 Sep (AK) and this or another was seen 24 Sep and captured and banded 25 Sep (MM, photo). Up to 3 (on 21 Oct) were at a house near Gering 7 Oct through the period (MS, fide KD), and 2 were at a house in the Wildcat Hills 23 Oct through the period (AK). There are some 35 records for Nebraska, most in a series of around 10-15 incursion winters, most recently 1983-84, 1985-86, and 1996-97.



This Steller's Jay of the Rocky Mountains subspecies *Cyanocitta stelleri annectens* was part of an influx into Scotts Bluff Co; it was photographed by Marie Smith in her yard 16 Oct 2012.

**Blue Jay:** Flocks of fall migrants are often conspicuous; a flock of 16 was noted in Merrick Co 14 Oct (LR, RH).

**Black-billed Magpie:** Distribution is still spotty in most areas; a very active observer statewide had seen none this year until the 14 at LM 10 Oct (JGJ). One in Valley Co 30 Oct was only the 2nd for the observer in 5 years there (BW).

**American Crow:** First flock reported was the 42 in Lancaster Co 28 Sep (LE), about the norm for first flocks. Best count was the 1000 along Highway 2 between Dunning and Grand Island 25 Oct (RE). Largest fall flocks are in the 2000-3000 range.

**Horned Lark:** Reports were routine for this common statewide fall migrant.

**Purple Martin:** The Omaha roost increased in size from 15,000 birds 4 Aug to a peak of 60,000 on 27 Aug (JR); 30,000 were still present 6 Sep (JR). This is the highest peak count (by about 5000) since the roost was first noted in 2008.

**Tree Swallow:** Reports were routine for this abundant fall migrant.

**Violet-green Swallow:** The small pond at Gilbert-Baker WMA, Sioux Co, is a good place to see this species at close range; 20 were there 7 Aug (DH et al.).

**Northern Rough-winged Swallow:** Reports were routine for this common statewide fall migrant.

**Bank Swallow:** Reports were routine for this common statewide fall migrant.

**Cliff Swallow:** Reports were routine for this abundant statewide fall migrant.

**Barn Swallow:** Reports were routine for this abundant statewide fall migrant.

**Black-capped Chickadee:** Parts of central Nebraska are still deficient in numbers of chickadees; one at a Grand Island feeder 23 Aug was a "big deal" (JLC) and 2 at another feeder there 26 Aug was first there for several years (SM). Another at Rowe Sanctuary, Buffalo Co, 25 Sep was the first there for 10+ years (KS). Farther afield, in east-central Nebraska, 2 at a feeder in Dodge Co were "like the good old days" (D&JP). In Lancaster Co, however, the species is "coming back", with sightings on 50 out of 72 trips there during the period (LE); in the past few years none had been found on similar trips.

**Mountain Chickadee:** This Rocky Mountain species staged another incursion into Nebraska; over the last 15 years there has been at least one report most winters, but increased numbers occurred only in 1996-97, 2007-2008, and now this winter. First noted was in Morrill Co 28 Sep (LJH), and there were ongoing sightings in Scotts Bluff and Sioux Cos through the period of at least 6 birds (m. ob.), including one banded at WHNC 4 Oct (MM).

**Tufted Titmouse:** This species appears to be uncommon in mid-town Omaha; 3 in mid-Omaha 22 Nov were the first there in 22 years (RM), and one was considered noteworthy in mid-town 19 Oct (JR).

**Red-breasted Nuthatch:** Numbers were up this fall, with best counts 12 in North Platte 13 Nov (TJW) and 7 at Pioneer's Park, Lincoln, 9 Nov (JGJ). The 4 in a Scotts Bluff Co yard 19 Oct were "more than usual" (AD).

**White-breasted Nuthatch:** Both forms of this species move in varying degrees from their breeding ranges in the fall. There is evidence that the Pine Ridge western subspecies *Sitta carolinensis nelsoni* moves from there; one at WSR 29 Sep (WRS et al.) was giving western-type calls. The eastern subspecies *S. c. cookei* breeds over most of the state except parts of the Panhandle and southwest. Most reports from the west have been in the period mid-Sep through mid-May, suggesting that breeding birds are greatly outnumbered there by winter visitors. This fall, singles that may have been winter visitors were at CLNWR 5 Sep (JGJ, LD), Bridgeport 12 Sep (LJH), and in a Scotts Bluff Co yard 19 Oct (AD). One in a veteran observer's yard south of Gering 19 Aug was a "new yard bird"

(AK); the same observer was “surprised” at how many had been seen this fall (AK).

**Pygmy Nuthatch:** Reports were routine for this common Pine Ridge and Wildcat Hills resident.

**Brown Creeper:** This species is an uncommon breeder in the Pine Ridge; singing males were at Chadron Creek WMA, Dawes Co, and Sowbelly Canyon, Sioux Co, 1 Aug (TJW) and in Monroe Canyon, Sioux Co, 7 Aug (DH et al.). Early fall arrivals were one at FF 15 Sep (JR) and in Omaha 21 Sep (JR).

**Rock Wren:** On occasion Rock Wrens drift eastward; one was at PL 26 Oct (JGJ), about the 10th (and latest) such record.

**House Wren:** A pair used 2 of 3 bird houses intended for chickadees to fledge 4 broods near Mitchell, 3 from one house and one from the second (KD).

**Winter Wren:** Reports were routine for this fall migrant, uncommon in the east, rare in the west.

**Sedge Wren:** While known for early return in fall in the east, such reports westerly are few; however, 5 were at Valentine NWR, Cherry Co, 10 Aug (DH). One in Dakota Co 13 Oct (BFH) was tardy; last dates are around 20-25 Oct.



Mountain Chickadee photographed by Marie Smith at her Scotts Bluff Co feeders  
13 Oct 2012.

**Marsh Wren:** As with Sedge Wren, evidence is accumulating that Marsh Wren may return early in fall and nest; 1-2 at Jack Sinn 1-6 Aug (TEL, LE) may have been candidates. True fall migration probably starts in mid-Aug; 1-2 were at Wyuka Cem, Lincoln, an unlikely breeding location, 16-18 Aug (LE).

**Carolina Wren:** Reports were west to Harlan Co (KS) and Hall Co (JLL, SM) and north to Garfield Co (B&KG), Antelope Co, where one at Grove L WMA 24-28 Nov was a first county record (MB, JJ, LR, RH), and Dakota Co (BFH).



**Blue-gray Gnatcatcher:** Reports continue from the northwestern and northeastern corners of the state (TJW, DH et al, BFH); the only area not yet "occupied" appears to be the Sandhills, where few sightings have been reported.

**Golden-crowned Kinglet:** Reports were routine for this fairly common statewide fall migrant.

**Ruby-crowned Kinglet:** Reports were routine for this common statewide fall migrant.

**Eastern Bluebird:** Several flocks of 30+ were seen in western Sarpy Co 4 Oct (CNK); fall flocking begins as early as late Jul.

**Mountain Bluebird:** Birds on the move included a flock of 12 in southwestern Kimball Co 30 Sep (WRS, CNK), 2 near Bingham 22 Oct (JGJ, LD), and one in Red Willow Co 27 Oct (TJW).

**Townsend's Solitaire:** Rather early for the location were one at Niobrara SP, Knox Co, 26 Oct (MB) and 2 in northern Antelope Co 27 Oct (MB). Numbers reported for the period were unremarkable, however.

**Veery:** Typical of fall, there was only one report, of one in Grand Island 5 Sep (SM), somewhat westerly.

**Gray-cheeked Thrush:** As with Veery, this rare fall eastern migrant was reported only once: in Lincoln 7 Sep (LE).

**Swainson's Thrush:** Reports challenged both ends of the migration window with reports 30 Aug in Scotts Bluff Co (KD) through 21 Oct in the same yard (KD). Best count was a record for fall 24 at WP 13 Sep (LE); 13 were at FF 2 days later (JR), second-highest on record for fall. Fall counts are far lower than those in spring.

**Hermit Thrush:** One in Cedar Co 23 Sep (WF) was rather early; early dates in the east are 22-23 Sep. Arrival is around 3 weeks earlier in the west, where migrants are of the Rocky Mountains subspecies *Catharus guttatus auduboni*; 1-3 at WSR 24-29 Sep (HKH et al.) were of this subspecies, with gray flanks. A few linger late in the southeast and may attempt to overwinter; singles were in Omaha 11 Nov (JGr) and Bellevue 28 Nov (L&BP).

**Wood Thrush:** Last reported timely departure was in Lincoln 24 Sep (R&SW), but record late by 11 days was one photographed in Boone Co 21 Oct (D&CN).

**American Robin:** Reports were routine for this abundant statewide fall migrant.

**Gray Catbird:** This species is uncommon in the northwest; one was in Monroe Canyon, Sioux Co, 7 Aug (DH et al.), and another near Mitchell 26 Aug was first for the year there (KD). One photographed in Lincoln Co 9 Sep was considered "not usual" there (VC). The 30 at FF 5 Sep (JR) was a record fall count.

**Northern Mockingbird:** A late brood of fledged young was being fed by adults in Pawnee Co 6 Sep (CNK).

**Sage Thrasher:** Typical of this rare Panhandle fall migrant was a single in northeastern Sioux Co 19 Aug (JJ), but the 6 at Scotts Bluff NM, Scotts Bluff Co, 1 Sep (MS, photo) was a high count. A very late bird appeared at a water pan in the Cherry Co Sandhills 20 Nov (MSS, photo); surprisingly, however, there are 2 records of overwintering for the state.

**Brown Thrasher:** Reports were routine for this common statewide fall migrant.

**European Starling:** Reports were routine for this abundant statewide fall migrant.

**American Pipit:** This species has an almost 3 month fall migration period, and this year led off with 2 rather early at Jack Sinn 31 Aug (LE). Early dates are 30-31 Aug with only 5 earlier dates. Last dates are 17-18 Nov, and so one at PL 17 Nov (SMa) and 3 at BOL (SMa) were rather late.

**Sprague's Pipit:** There were 7 reports involving 19 birds, all in the east, the best fall for reporting this species yet, as observers become more familiar with its calls and behavior. Best counts were the 9 at SCP 13 Oct (JR) and 5 at Prairie Dog WPA, southwestern Kearney Co, 30 Sep (KS, JLL). The remaining 5 reports were of singles: Saunders Co 22 Sep (LE), SCP 26 Oct (KP, RSt), Pierce Co 30 Sep (JR), Antelope Co 13 Oct (MB), and Otoe Co 23 Oct (CNK).

**Cedar Waxwing:** The 158 in Lancaster Co 19 Oct (LE) was 3rd-highest fall count on record; highs are 200+.

**Lapland Longspur:** One at SCP 13 Oct (JMc; details) was rather early; early dates are 9-10 Oct. Sixty with Horned Larks in Hall Co 13 Nov (RSt) was the first sizeable count.

**Chestnut-collared Longspur:** Reports were routine for this fairly common western summer resident, rare in the north.

**Smith's Longspur:** One at SCP 13 Oct was identified by its rattle call but not seen (JR). Of around 29 fall records, most are during the second half of Oct.

**McCown's Longspur:** Migrating flocks first appear mid-Sep; 25 were at WSR 21 Sep (HKH).

**Snow Bunting:** Usually only a few or none appear before the end of the fall period, and so the 20+ reported this fall suggested a good upcoming winter in terms of numbers. Best count was 16 at WSR 15 Nov (HKH), 1-3 were at PL 15-30 Nov (JGJ, LE, RSt), and 3 were at GPD 18 Nov (MB).

**Ovenbird:** One at Mercer Woods, Omaha, 4-9 Oct (JR) was rather late, as late dates are 3-7 Oct; there are only 5 later records. Also tardy was one in Papillion 3 Oct (PS).

**Louisiana Waterthrush:** None were reported; this species departs early and is rarely reported in Aug-Sep.

**Northern Waterthrush:** Only 2 were reported of this usually fairly common fall migrant, singles at Jack Sinn 21 Aug (LE) and in Platte Co 6 Sep (MN).

**Black-and-white Warbler:** Two in southeastern Washington Co 10 Aug (CNK) were likely early fall migrants; breeding has not been confirmed in the lower Missouri River Valley although there are 7 previous reports 6 Jun-8 Aug, most from Sarpy Co. Early fall dates are 12-15 Aug. A rather early fem was at Walnut Grove Park, Omaha, 15 Aug (RS).

**Tennessee Warbler:** One in southeastern Washington Co 10 Aug (CNK) was record early by 2 days. This species is less than annual in the Panhandle, with only 11 prior records; this fall there were two: one at WSR 29 Sep (WRS, CNK, HKH, KD) and one near Mitchell 11 Oct (KD). Another was westerly at Valentine NWR, Cherry Co, 30 Sep (AR).

**Orange-crowned Warbler:** Reports were routine for this common statewide fall migrant.

**Nashville Warbler:** Four at WP 19 Aug (LE) were rather early; early dates are 18-19 Aug. There are only 8 previous Panhandle reports, and so the 3 this fall were

a surprise: singles were at Gering Cem 6 Sep (KD), Bridgeport 1 Oct (LJH), and near Mitchell 11 Oct (KD).

**MacGillivray's Warbler:** None of this rare Panhandle fall migrant were reported.

**Mourning Warbler:** Early dates previously were 21-22 Aug and so the 2 earlier reports this fall were of interest: 1-2 were at Wyuka Cem, Lincoln, 16-17 Aug (LE) and one was in the observer's Lincoln yard 18 Aug (JGJ).

**Kentucky Warbler:** One heard and seen at Basswood WMA, Dakota Co, 7 Oct (D&JP) was 2nd-latest on record by one day.

**Common Yellowthroat:** A fem in Lincoln 24 Oct (LE) was rather late; there are only 6 later dates, including 2 in Dec.

**American Redstart:** The 10 feeding in cattails at a Gilbert-Baker WMA pond, Sioux Co, 7 Aug (DH et al.) were likely local family groups; this species breeds on the Pine Ridge. Provenance of a "young" bird at L Minatare, Scotts Bluff Co, 7 Aug (KD) was problematic, although there have been sporadic summer reports of this species in the county since 1999.

**Cerulean Warbler:** None were reported; this species is reported rarely into early Sep from the lower Missouri River Valley.

**Northern Parula:** There are few reports into Sep; an imm fem was at FF 5 Sep (JR), a single was in south Bellevue 10 Sep (L&BP), and a first fall fem was at FF 15 Sep (JR).

**Magnolia Warbler:** Only the 8th Panhandle report was one at WSR 29 Sep (KD, HKH, CNK, WRS).

**Bay-breasted Warbler:** Although more common in fall than in spring, this species is rare westward. A first fall bird was in Dundy Co 22 Sep (LR, RH), only the 5th fall record away from the east. Surprisingly, none were reported from the east this fall.

**Blackburnian Warbler:** There were only 2 reports, a poor showing. Surprisingly, 3 of the 4 birds involved, 2 ad males and an imm, were at Gering Cem 6 Sep (KD). This is only the 17th report away from the east and 9th for the Panhandle. The lone eastern report was of a fem at Walnut Grove Park, Omaha, 25 Aug (RS).

**Yellow Warbler:** Somewhat unusual was a "small flock" of 13 at FF 1 Sep (JR).

**Chestnut-sided Warbler:** As with Blackburnian Warbler, there were only 2 reports, one of which was a Panhandle record. An imm at WSR 29 Sep (WRS et al., photo) was only the 3rd Panhandle record. The other report was of one in Bellevue 9 Sep (CNK).

**Blackpoll Warbler:** Generally rare in fall but statewide in distribution, there were 2 reports, one near North Platte 19 Sep (VC) and the other at WP 24 Sep (LE).

**Black-throated Blue Warbler:** The only report of this rare fall migrant was of a window strike at the CenturyLink Center, Omaha, 19 Sep (JED, photo; [http://wildbirdsbroadcasting.blogspot.com/2012\\_09\\_01\\_archive.html](http://wildbirdsbroadcasting.blogspot.com/2012_09_01_archive.html)).

**Palm Warbler:** This species is a rare fall migrant statewide, but this fall there were no fewer than 8 reports, bringing the total of all fall reports to only 50. Two in Lincoln 14 Oct (RSt) were rather late, even for this late fall statewide migrant; late dates are 14-20 Oct. Other reports included one in Lancaster Co 20 Sep (LE), one in Scotts Bluff Co 22-23 Sep (fide KD, MS photo), 2 in Wayne Co 22 Sep of the expected subspecies *Setophaga palmarum palmarum* (MB), one in

Scotts Bluff Co 30 Sep (AD), one in Saunders Co 5 Oct (SMa), one in Douglas Co 6 Oct (SMa), and one in Lincoln 9 Oct (LE).

**Pine Warbler:** In recent years this species has appeared statewide in fall, when it is more often reported than in spring, although still rare. This fall the 3 reports were westerly: single males were at WHNC 11 and 29 Sep, likely the same bird, banded 11 Sep (MM, WRS, CNK), an imm fem was in Scottsbluff 4 Oct (RSg), and one was near North Platte 7 Nov (TJW).

**Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler:** Somewhat easterly were 2 in Lincoln Co 10 Oct (LDe). One banded at WHNC 5 Sep (MM) was likely a migrant as breeding there has not been confirmed.

**Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler:** The 80 in Burt Co 11 Oct (CNK) was a good count; high counts are 100-129.

**Yellow-throated Warbler:** Rarely reported in fall, a first fall fem was in Omaha 24 Aug (JR) and a single at FF 15 Sep (JR) was rather late; late dates are 13-15 Sep, although this species has lingered into Dec a few times.



This Townsend's Warbler was eastern in Lincoln Co 28 Sep. Photo by Virginia Clark.

**Townsend's Warbler:** There were 5 reports from the west, as expected in the period 24 Aug-28 Sep; best count was 5 at Gering Cem 6 Sep (KD). Easterly was one in Lincoln Co 28 Sep (VC, photo).

**Black-throated Green Warbler:** This was a typical fall for this species, with 8 birds reported from the east 1-22 Sep (JR, PS, LE).

**Canada Warbler:** Similarly with this species, this fall was typical with 5 birds reported in the east 19 Aug-4 Sep (MB, JR, LE, CNK). The 19 Aug report was rather early, a single in Knox Co (MB).

**Wilson's Warbler:** Reports were routine for this common statewide fall migrant.

**Yellow-breasted Chat:** Considered unusual at the locations were singles in Burwell 7 Sep, the first there in 7 years (B&KG), and one in Lincoln Co sandhills 9 Sep (VC, photo).

**Green-tailed Towhee:** The only report of this rare but not annual fall migrant was of one at Gering Cem 31 Aug (fide KD); there are about 23 fall records, most in the narrow window 31 Aug-21 Sep.

**Spotted Towhee:** Previous early dates in the east were 17-21 Sep, and so the 3 early dates this fall were unexpected; singles were at BOL 15 Sep (LE), Omaha 20 Sep (JR), and Wehrspann L 21 Sep (CNK). Drought conditions in the summer range may have caused early departure.

**Eastern Towhee:** Reports were routine for this common eastern summer resident and fall migrant, less common west to central Nebraska.

**Cassin's Sparrow:** None were reported, not surprising after the lack of summer reports. There are few Aug dates for this early-departing summer resident of southwest Nebraska.

**American Tree Sparrow:** Reports were routine for this common statewide fall migrant and winter visitor.

**Chipping Sparrow:** Considered "the species of the season at the banding station" at WHNC, an amazing 125 were banded there 7-14 Sep; and last banded was 4 Oct (MM). In the east, a good count of 126 was made in Lancaster Co 12 Oct (LE) and 65 were in Saunders Co 4 Oct (CNK). Last reported in the east were 2 at PL 28 Oct (LE).

**Clay-colored Sparrow:** One at ADF 14 Nov (LF) was rather late; late dates are 13-15 Nov.

**Brewer's Sparrow:** The 4 singles reported were in the western Panhandle 7 Aug-14 Sep (DH et al., AD, LJH); one at WSR 9 Aug was a "new yard bird" (HKH) and apparently an early migrant displaced by the very dry condition of Panhandle grasslands.

**Field Sparrow:** There were 2 reports of the bland-faced western subspecies *Spizella pusilla arenacea*, which is an uncommon breeder and migrant in the west. Two were in Dundy Co 22 Sep (LR, RH) and one was at North Platte SL 28 Sep (WRS, CNK).

**Vesper Sparrow:** Reports were routine for this common statewide fall migrant.

**Lark Sparrow:** Reports were routine for this common statewide fall migrant.

**Lark Bunting:** The 2 reports from the east were unexpected, as there are only 5 previous such records. A fem in Seward Co 4 Aug was the observer's first in 30 years in the county (JG), and another fem was in Dodge Co 6 Sep (D&JP). Also easterly were 3 males in alt. plumage in Custer Co 26 Aug (TH) and one at Lanz L, Rock Co, 27 Aug (JGJ, LD).

**Savannah Sparrow:** Reports were routine for this common statewide fall migrant.

**Grasshopper Sparrow:** Reports were routine for this common summer resident and fall migrant.

**Henslow's Sparrow:** The 3 reports of this rare fall migrant were of singles in the southeast as expected: a juv in Lancaster Co 21 Sep (LE), one at PL the same day (LE), and one at BOL 16 Oct (GR).

**Le Conte's Sparrow:** Rare in central Nebraska, a good find was the 2 juvs in Custer Co 1 Oct, only the 3rd record for the observer in that county (TH, details). One in Wayne Co 17 Sep (WF) was rather early; early dates are 14-16 Sep. This species is fairly hardy in fall; one was in Sarpy Co 30 Oct (CNK), one was at Prairie View L, Douglas Co, the same day (JR), and 3 were there 3 Nov (KM). Last dates are 1-5 Nov.

**Nelson's Sparrow:** Far more reports than usual were received, likely as observers discover how and where to find these birds. Reports were skewed to the later end of the known migration period, with last report, one in Cass Co 23 Oct (CNK), rather late. Last dates are 20-23 Oct. In all this fall about 16 were reported (m. ob.), all as expected in the east.

**Fox Sparrow:** One at Boyer Chute NWR, Washington Co, 28 Oct had a "grayish to lead color on top of its head and back; in flight the tail was rusty" (CNK). There are occasional reports, fewer than 10 in all, from across the state of similar grayish birds. It is likely that these birds are of the grayer Rocky Mountain subspecies *Passerella iliaca zaboria*, or possibly the enigmatic northern form known as *P. i. altivagans*, which may be a mix of up to 3 Fox Sparrow subspecies including *P. i. zaboria* and *P. i. iliaca*.

**Song Sparrow:** Reports were routine for this fairly common fall migrant.

**Lincoln's Sparrow:** Last reported was at an Omaha nursery 26-29 Nov (JR); there are several Dec records in the southeast.

**Swamp Sparrow:** Reports were routine for this common eastern, uncommon western, fall migrant.

**White-throated Sparrow:** Earliest reported was at FF 19 Sep (L&BP); early dates are 14-15 Oct. Usually rare in the west, there were several reports of 1-2 in Scotts Bluff Co 1-21 Oct (MM, AK, KD, RSg) as well as one at Bridgeport 1 Oct (LJH) and 2 in the western Sandhills 11 Oct (JGJ, LD).

**Harris's Sparrow:** Rare in the west, 6 at Agate, Sioux Co, 3 Oct (JL) were a good find.

**White-crowned Sparrow:** The 150, mostly juvs, at Kilpatrick L, Box Butte Co, 28 Sep (WRS, CNK) was a good count; highs are 160-200.

**Dark-eyed (White-winged) Junco:** Easterly were singles in Lincoln Co 2 Nov (VC) and at LM 17 Nov (TJW). One banded at WHNC 21 Sep (MM) was early; this species does not breed there.

**Dark-eyed (Slate-colored) Junco:** Earliest in the west was banded at WHNC 6 Sep (MM), whereas first in the east was 22 Sep, the observer's "earliest ever in eastern Nebraska" (JR).

**Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco:** One banded 10 Sep at WHNC (MM) was 2nd-earliest on record. Early dates are 17-21 Sep. The only report from the east, where uncommon, was of one in Lincoln 23 Nov (SS, details).

**Dark-eyed (Pink-sided) Junco:** Earliest were 3 near Mitchell 22 Sep (KD); early dates are Sep 17-22.

**Dark-eyed (Gray-headed) Junco:** This form has become almost annual in recent years. One was in a yard near Mitchell 30 Aug-1 Sep (KD, photo), about the 14th documented record, and earliest on record.



This Dark-eyed (Gray-headed) Junco, the 14th documented record, was photographed in a yard near Mitchell on 31 Aug 2012 by Kathy DeLara.

**Summer Tanager:** A fem at WP 20 Sep (LE) was tardy; last dates are 26-28 Sep.

**Scarlet Tanager:** Reports were routine for this fairly common eastern summer resident and fall migrant.

**Western Tanager:** A fem in Kearney 9 Sep (KS) was one of few central Nebraska reports. Rather late was one at WHNC 30 Sep (KD); late dates are 4-7 Oct.

**Northern Cardinal:** The small population continues at Bridgeport, near the western reaches of the Nebraska range; singles were seen 6 and 20 Aug (LJH). One was in a Mitchell yard 23-24 Nov (KD); there are a couple of small populations in this county (Scotts Bluff) also. Rather late recently-fledged young were being fed in Lincoln Co 12 Sep (TJW) and in Lincoln 30 Aug (JGJ).

**Rose-breasted Grosbeak:** A Lincoln feeder hosted an imm male 18-25 Oct and the same feeder a fem 26 Oct (PC); oddly, there are about a dozen late Oct-early Jan records.

**Black-headed Grosbeak:** Reports were routine for this common western, fairly common central, summer resident and fall migrant.

- Blue Grosbeak:** Reports were routine for this fairly common statewide summer resident and fall migrant.
- Lazuli Bunting:** Reports were routine for this fairly common Panhandle summer resident and fall migrant.
- Indigo Bunting:** There were 2 reports of rather late fledglings being fed by ads: in Bellevue 15 Aug (CNK) and at FF 5 Sep (JR). The observer's yard in southwestern Dixon Co has a strange attraction for lingering imm Indigo Buntings; an imm male was there through 16 Oct (JJ), and in recent years early Oct records are the norm there, including one that lingered into early Jan (JJ).
- Dickcissel:** Continuing the trend noted in the summer report, few westerly reports were received compared with recent years. This may be another effect of very dry grassland conditions westward. One was at CLNWR 7 Aug (JGJ, LD), and another was in Dawes Co 17 Aug (WF).
- Bobolink:** Reports were routine for this common summer resident mostly in the north and east and uncommon fall migrant.
- Red-winged Blackbird:** Reports were routine for this abundant fall migrant.
- Eastern Meadowlark:** Reports were routine for this common summer resident south and east, localized elsewhere, and fall migrant.
- Western Meadowlark:** Reports were routine for this common statewide summer resident and late fall migrant.
- Yellow-headed Blackbird:** Reports were routine for this common statewide summer resident and fall migrant.
- Rusty Blackbird:** The many reports of good numbers were encouraging for a species considered to be in decline. In Lancaster Co it was the "best year yet for sightings" (LE). At least 200 were reported in all, including 85 at Wanahoo L 3 Nov (JGJ), 55 in Dakota Co 30 Oct (BFH), and 27 in Lancaster Co 31 Oct (LE). Earliest was one in Wayne Co 22 Sep (MB), 3rd-earliest on record; early dates are 28-29 Sep. Westerly records are rare; 2 were in Lincoln Co 21 Oct (TJW).
- Brewer's Blackbird:** One in Sherman Co 17 Aug (WF) was east of the breeding range and likely an early migrant, although migrants away from the breeding range are usually not noted until late Aug.
- Common Grackle:** Reports were routine for this abundant fall migrant.
- Great-tailed Grackle:** Sandhills reports have only recently become more routine; 2 were in Holt Co 19 Aug (JJ), one was in Burwell 27 Aug (JGJ, LD), and 2 were at Lakeside 6 Sep (JGJ, LD). A bit tardy for a sizeable flock were the 55 in Ogallala 5 Nov (CWH).
- Brown-headed Cowbird:** Reports were routine for this abundant statewide fall migrant.
- Orchard Oriole:** Very late were a fem with begging young in Scotts Bluff Co 25 Aug (KD).
- Bullock's Oriole:** Males depart early in fall, leaving imms and fems, which usually depart by mid-Aug. Thus somewhat late were a fem or imm bird near Mitchell 25 Aug (KD) and an imm male (possibly a hybrid) there 1 Sep (KD). Last reported was a rather late single at WSR 8 Sep (AK). Last dates are 11-12 Sep.
- Baltimore Oriole:** Only the 6th fall record for the Panhandle was an ad male near Mitchell 1 Sep (KD). Singles in Dixon Co 29 Sep (JJ) and in Otoe Co 30 Sep (LF) were rather late; late dates are 1-4 Oct.



**Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch:** None were reported; most years birds have arrived by mid-Nov.

**Purple Finch:** Numbers were only average and all reports were from the east as expected; earliest were the 6 in Dakota Co 7 Oct (D&JP), about on time.

**Cassin's Finch:** Five were banded at WHNC 5-26 Sep (MM); one of these, a fem, was seen there 29 Sep (WRS, CNK). Two males and a fem were there 22 Sep (AK, KD), and a male was photographed there 10 Nov (KD). This species may be increasing in numbers in the area; they were "not all that rare" in the Scottsbluff area (RSg).

**House Finch:** Reports were routine for this common statewide resident.

**Red Crossbill:** The unusual number of statewide summer reports was continued into fall, with one in Dodge Co 3 Aug (D&JP) and another in Omaha 25 Aug (JR). Good numbers continued in the east; Holy Sepulchre Cem, Omaha, hosted up to 12 in a mixed flock with White-wingeds 11-29 Nov (GR, m. ob.), 7 were at Forest Lawn Cem, Omaha, 27 Oct (JR), 5 were at BOL 5 Nov (JC, SS), and 6 were in Lincoln 17 Nov (LE).



This White-winged Crossbill was photographed at Wildcat Hills Nature Center, Scotts Bluff Co, 10 Nov 2012 by Kathy DeLara.

**White-winged Crossbill:** This was an incursion year, with the arrival in mid-Nov of good numbers. The last 3 incursions were in 1997-98, 2001-02, and 2011-12. This fall 20+ were at Holy Sepulchre Cem, Omaha, 11-29 Nov (RM, m. ob.), a male was at WHNC 10-11 Nov (KD, photo), one was in North Platte 13 Nov (TJW), 4 were at Tekamah Cem 14 Nov (CNK), 2 were at a Norfolk Cem 17 Nov (MB), 2 were at South Bend 27 Nov (PM), and 3-4 were at Mercer Woods, Omaha 30 Nov (JR).

**Common Redpoll:** A few reach northern Nebraska most winters, but this year reports were virtually statewide by the end of the period, although numbers were not large. Earliest were about on time with previous years, 3 near North Platte 6

Nov (fide TJW), and best count was only 9, those in Antelope Co 24 Nov (LR, RH). In all, about 38 were reported (m. ob.).

**Pine Siskin:** Good numbers appeared statewide, including 100 at an Omaha feeder 26 Nov, "unprecedented in 30+ years" (NR); elsewhere, 75 frequented the feeders at WHNC 11 Nov (KD), and 60 were in Cass Co 7 Nov (CNK). Earliest away from breeding areas was an imm fem at an Omaha feeder 12-13 Sep, the observer's earliest ever in Omaha by 18 days (JR).



This Evening Grosbeak was photographed near North Platte, Lincoln Co, 19 Oct 2012 by Virginia Clark.

**Lesser Goldfinch:** There were several reports of this now-regular Panhandle summer visitor; WHNC hosted 1-2 from late Jul through 11 Sep (MM, AK) and 3 were at Coffee Park, Sioux Co, 7 Aug (DH et al.). Possibly one of the 3 at Coffee Park was a black-backed male seen at nearby Sowbelly Canyon 16 Aug (WF), and a green-backed male was at Cedar Canyon WMA, Scotts Bluff Co, 16 Aug (WF).

**American Goldfinch:** Heat affected goldfinches visiting a Lincoln yard: one observer reported that during the summer 6 individuals were seen in the yard "struggling to breathe in the high temperatures and dying", and far fewer juvs than usual were seen (R&SW).

**Evening Grosbeak:** The 4 reports were from the western part of the state: 2 were in a yard near Mitchell 17 Oct (KD), one was in a Lincoln Co yard 19 Oct (VC, photo), 4-5 were at WHNC 26 Oct (AP), and one was in an Ogallala yard 1 Nov (JO, photo). Other than spring 2010 sightings, this is the first set of multiple sightings in the state since the 1990s.

**House Sparrow:** Reports were routine for this common statewide resident.

## Bellevue Fall Field Days

by Janis Paseka

The 2012 NOU Fall Field Days was held in conjunction with the Inland Bird Banding Association meeting at Fontenelle Forest Nature Center in Bellevue on October 26-28. The meeting, organized by Betty Grenon and Rick Schmid, drew a total of 104 attendees, including 33 members of the Inland Bird Banding Association.

On Friday evening, Phil Swanson's photographic presentation "Welcome to Omaha ...It's for the Birds" included a brief history of Omaha, an overview of area birding hotspots and photos of many of the birds which can be seen in the area. Following the presentation, a group led by Al Reyer went to Hitchcock Nature Center north of Crescent, Iowa, to view Saw-whet Owl banding conducted by Jerry Toll and Sandy Reinken. Field trips on Saturday were led by Phil Swanson, Betty Grenon, Clem Klaphake, Elliott Bedows and Loren and Babs Padelford and included the following destinations: Fontenelle Forest, Neale Woods, Nathan's Lake, Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuge, Schilling Wildlife Management Area, Arbor Lodge State Park, Prairie Owl Lake, Hitchcock Nature Center, Lake Manawa State Park, Walnut Creek Lake and Wehrspann Lake. Saturday afternoon presentation topics included the Nebraska Breeding Bird Atlas II by Wayne Mollhoff, diurnal raptor banding by Jerry Toll, Saw-whet Owl banding by Sandy Reinken, MAPS banding by Rick Schmid, and raptor rehabilitation by Denise Lewis.

On Saturday evening, Neal Ratzlaff appeared in the guise of Spencer Baird, first curator at the Smithsonian Institution and presented a program entitled "Names for Birds - Physicians, Women and the Smithsonian". His program touched on much of the history of ornithology in the United States in the mid 1800s and looked especially at the discovery, description and naming of Grace's, Virginia's, Lucy's and Blackburnian Warblers.

Sunday morning field trip destinations included some of the closer areas covered on Saturday. Some of the weekend highlights were Surf Scoter, Common Loon, American Woodcock, Hermit Thrush, Red Crossbill and 15 sparrow species. The total species count was 111.

## NOU Fall Field Days - Bellevue

	Nebraska counties					Iowa counties	
	Cass	Douglas	Otoe	Sarpy	Washington	Harrison	Pottawattamie
Greater White-fronted Goose				x	x	x	
Snow Goose				x	x	x	
Canada Goose	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Wood Duck			x	x	x	x	
Gadwall	x		x	x			x
American Wigeon			x				
Mallard	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Northern Shoveler		x	x	x			x
Northern Pintail					x	x	x
Green-winged Teal	x		x		x	x	
Canvasback		x					x
Redhead		x			x		x
Ring-necked Duck		x	x		x	x	x
Lesser Scaup		x	x		x	x	x
Surf Scoter							x
Hooded Merganser	x		x			x	
Ruddy Duck	x	x		x		x	x
Ring-necked Pheasant		x			x		
Wild Turkey			x	x	x	x	
Common Loon						x	
Pied-billed Grebe		x	x	x	x	x	x
Western Grebe							x
Double-crested Cormorant	x	x		x	x	x	x
American White Pelican					x	x	x
Great Blue Heron	x	x	x		x	x	x
Osprey		x					
Bald Eagle	x		x	x	x	x	x
Northern Harrier			x	x	x	x	
Sharp-shinned Hawk	x	x		x	x		x
Cooper's Hawk	x	x			x		
Red-tailed Hawk	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Sora					x		
American Coot	x	x			x	x	x
Killdeer					x	x	

## NOU Fall Field Days - Bellevue

	Nebraska counties					Iowa counties	
	Cass	Douglas	Otoe	Sarpy	Washington	Harrison	Pottawattamie
Greater Yellowlegs			x				
Pectoral Sandpiper			x				
Wilson's Snipe			x	x			
American Woodcock							x
Bonaparte's Gull							x
Franklin's Gull					x		x
Ring-billed Gull	x	x		x	x	x	x
Forster's Tern					x		
Rock Pigeon	x	x	x		x	x	x
Eurasian Collared-Dove	x		x			x	
Mourning Dove	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Eastern Screech-Owl							x
Great Horned Owl		x					x
Barred Owl			x	x			x
Northern Saw-whet Owl							x
Belted Kingfisher	x	x		x			x
Red-headed Woodpecker			x	x	x		
Red-bellied Woodpecker	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker		x	x	x			
Downy Woodpecker	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Hairy Woodpecker	x		x	x	x	x	
Northern Flicker	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Pileated Woodpecker				x			
American Kestrel	x				x		x
Merlin					x		
Blue Jay	x	x	x	x	x	x	
American Crow	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Horned Lark					x		x
Black-capped Chickadee	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Tufted Titmouse	x	x	x	x	x		
Red-breasted Nuthatch		x	x	x			
White-breasted Nuthatch	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Brown Creeper	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Winter Wren						x	

## NOU Fall Field Days - Bellevue

	Nebraska counties					Iowa counties	
	Cass	Douglas	Otoe	Sarpy	Washington	Harrison	Pottawattamie
Carolina Wren	x	x	x	x	x		
Marsh Wren			x		x		
Golden-crowned Kinglet		x	x		x		
Ruby-crowned Kinglet				x	x		
Eastern Bluebird	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Hermit Thrush	x	x		x			
American Robin	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Brown Thrasher							x
European Starling	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
American Pipit					x		
Cedar Waxwing	x	x		x	x		
Yellow-rumped Warbler		x	x	x	x	x	x
Spotted Towhee	x				x		
Eastern Towhee					x		
American Tree Sparrow	x		x	x	x	x	
Chipping Sparrow				x	x	x	
Clay-colored Sparrow						x	
Field Sparrow			x				
Vesper Sparrow			x		x		
Savannah Sparrow			x	x	x	x	
Grasshopper Sparrow					x		
LeConte's Sparrow					x	x	
Fox Sparrow	x			x	x	x	
Song Sparrow	x		x	x	x	x	
Lincoln's Sparrow	x		x	x	x	x	
Swamp Sparrow	x	x	x	x	x	x	
White-throated Sparrow	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Harris's Sparrow	x		x	x	x	x	
White-crowned Sparrow			x		x		
Dark-eyed Junco	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Northern Cardinal	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Red-winged Blackbird	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Eastern Meadowlark					x		
Western Meadowlark						x	

## NOU Fall Field Days - Bellevue

	Nebraska counties					Iowa counties	
	Cass	Douglas	Otoe	Sarpy	Washington	Harrison	Pottawattamie
meadowlark sp.	x		x		x		
Rusty Blackbird					x	x	
Common Grackle			x		x	x	
Brown-headed Cowbird	x		x		x	x	
Purple Finch	x			x			
House Finch	x	x		x	x		
Red Crossbill		x					
Pine Siskin		x			x		
American Goldfinch	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
House Sparrow	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
<b>Totals by county</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Total species: 111 Nebraska total: 100 species Iowa total: 78 species</b>							

## Notes on a Greater Sage-Grouse Record by Levi L. Mohler

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In Nebraska, Greater Sage-Grouse has been considered an uncommon casual winter visitor in the extreme northwest (Sharpe et al. 2001). This species may now be extirpated in Nebraska due to habitat loss. There have been no known Nebraska observations of Greater Sage-Grouse in the last 25 years. The only documented record accepted by the NOURC of Greater Sage-Grouse in Nebraska (Accession #243) is a description of an adult male in September 1987 in extreme northwest Sioux County by Douglas Kapke (Grenon AG. 1990).

In 2002 Wayne Mollhoff received the following record from Levi L. Mohler and submitted it to the NOURC in 2011.

As a biologist for the Game, Forestation and Parks Commission (1941-1954), I worked first with Greater Prairie-Chickens and Sharp-tailed Grouse, but I was curious to see if Nebraska also had Greater Sage-Grouse. On several trips to northwest Sioux County, I interviewed ranchers, some of whom had seen sage grouse farther west, in Wyoming, not in Nebraska.

Until 1951 I had failed to find Sage-Grouse in Nebraska. Then, on the early morning of Thursday, April 12, 1951, I saw a large male Sage-Grouse in full display directly in front of me on a country road in northern Sioux County. Several Sharp-tailed Grouse were nearby.

The Sage-Grouse displayed for a few minutes. Then, seeming disturbed, it took flight to the southeast, disappearing perhaps a mile away. I was driving from west to east when the Sage-Grouse was first seen. Ardmore, South Dakota, could be seen from near this location.

Besides the male Greater Sage-Grouse, I also saw twenty Sharp-tailed Grouse and over fifty antelope in northern Sioux County during the morning drive, which began and ended at Crawford. I began the morning's drive before sunrise.

Upon receiving this record from Mollhoff in 2011, I tried to contact Mohler for more information about this sighting. Unfortunately, after searching the internet, I found that he had passed away in April 2003 at the age of 94 years. During this research, I discovered that Mohler was at the forefront of studies in wildlife ecology in Nebraska and had published numerous papers on grouse, prairie-chickens, pheasants, and big game. Additionally, from his online obituary, I found that he had kept a daily diary for 65 years. Seeking possible additional information on the Sage-Grouse record, I contacted one of his two daughters regarding this diary. She contacted her sister, who had possession of the diary, and I was sent a photocopy of Mohler's hand-written April 12, 1951, diary entry which reads in part:

*"Thurs. Up early + into N W Sioux County. Saw 20 sharptailed grouse, 1 sage hen, + over 50 antelope. Ate breakfast in gulch S of Ardmore, then returned to Ogallala"*

The Greater Sage-Grouse record was reviewed by the 2011 Nebraska Ornithologists' Union Records Committee (Accession #1431). This record was classified as Class IV, meaning the identification is probably correct but not beyond reasonable doubt. This was due to the fact that it contained no detailed description of the bird, a necessity for approval of written records (Brogie MA. 2011). Despite the submitted record lacking details, there is no doubt that Mohler was an expert in upland game birds, which, coupled with his hand-written diary account, provides tantalizing evidence to support one of the last known accounts of a Greater Sage-Grouse in Nebraska.

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